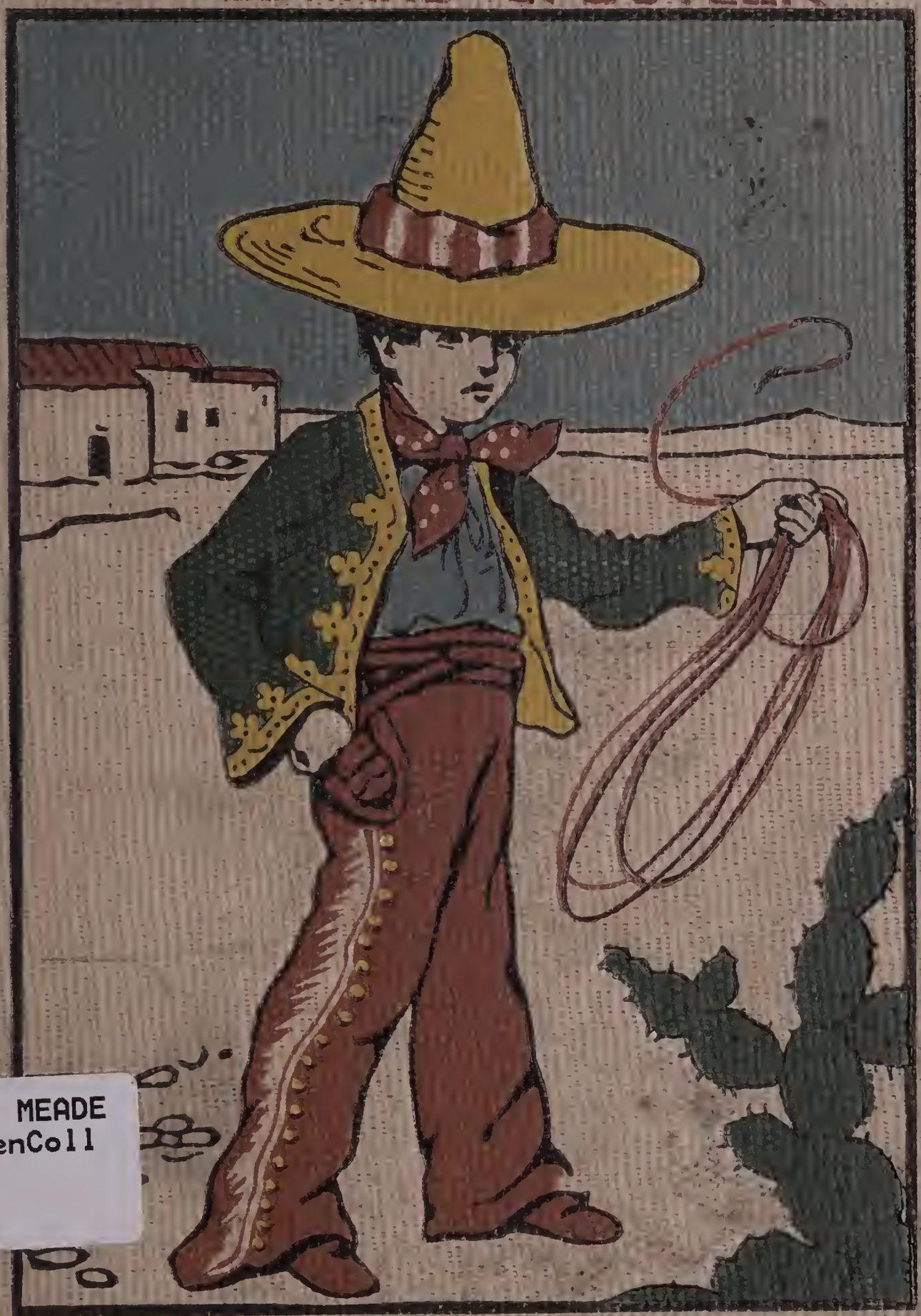
OUR LITTLE MEXICAN COUSIN

BY EDWARD C. BUTLER



THE LITTLE COUSIN SERIES BY

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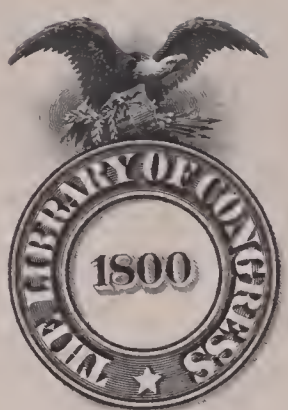

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By

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Illustrated

Boston

L. C. Page & Company

MDCCCCV

Published September, 1905

COLONIAL PRESS
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, U. S. A.

Preface

One generation ago American histories pictured Mexico as a land of volcanoes and palms, cathedrals, bandits and revolutions, and a dark-eyed race riding about in stages. Even in 1874 railroads and telegraphs, the veins and nerves of a nation, were unknown, and New York was a fortnight's steamer ride from Mexico City; to-day they are but one hundred hours apart. Bandits and revolutions are now unknown, the only revolutions being of car-wheels and machinery belting.

The mental revolution includes the boys and girls of Mexico. Family life, formerly intimate and conservative, broadens, and the

old-time interdependence gives way to independence. English is now spoken by the youth; in fact, they are more ambitious to learn English than their American cousins to learn Spanish. Lads and lassies of this lovely land are sent to American schools to finish their education. They return with American ideas. The boys are as enthusiastic over baseball and football as are the American boys; the girls fraternize freely with foreign playmates.

Surely our little Mexican cousin now lives in a new morning of thought, on the threshold of modernizing ideas and at the open door of expectant promise and radiant possibility.

The siesta and the fiesta fade, the "mañana" habit is being forgotten, and mutual respect and regard increasingly unite the Mexicans and Americans. In 1894, the writer, as secretary of the American Legation, in conversation with President Porfirio Diaz, heard him

call the United States "Mexico's big brother." God grant that this big brother may always treat his Mexican sister with gallantry and kindness, thus helping her to work out her own wonderful destiny.

Contents

List of Illustrations

Our Little Mexican Cousin

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW YEAR

On New Year's Eve Juanita had been allowed to sit up long past her usual bedtime, that she might enjoy the celebration of the holiday, as well as take part in the religious observances. To Juanita the latter were no less important than the former, for she belonged to a devout Roman Catholic family. With them holy days and holidays were one and the same thing, and the Mexicans have a great many of them.

Juanita's father, Alvaro Jiminez, was a merchant of the City of Mexico, and the home he

had provided for his family was all that a moderate income, combined with good taste, could command.

The big door of this home opened on a tiled entrance leading to a lovely garden. A large palm rose in the centre, its fronded leaves gracefully falling over beds of violets, heliotrope, and pansies. A brilliant bougainvillea vine, cerise in colour, trailed along one side of the wall like a rich robe instinct with life. A broad, tesselated corridor ran around the garden. This *patio*, or court, was open to the sky, as is common in Mexican homes, and sunshine and light thus reached all the rooms.

The parlour was a stately room, the chairs lined up on each side of the sofa, so the men could sit on one side and the women on the other.

Of course all the rooms were comfortably furnished, but one of the most interesting in the house was the kitchen.

SEÑOR JIMINEZ.

The Mexican kitchen is always provided with a *brasero*, or range built of bricks, about three feet high and from three to six feet wide. On the top are two or more square openings, each containing a grate, and underneath the grate is an open place to furnish draught and from which to collect the ashes. Charcoal is used in the *braseros*.

The earthen pots and iron kettles are placed on the burning coals, and meals are therefore cooked in a very short time. The Mexican cook can thus prepare three or four articles at once. No stovepipes are used, and the walls of the kitchen are soon very black from the smoke.

Sometimes a brick oven is built apart from the *brasero*. When the family has no oven, the cook puts the food in a dish, with a piece of sheet iron on top covered with hot coals, thus cooking underneath and above.

Though weary, Juanita was very happy on

the morning of New Year's Day. The celebration of the previous evening was fresh in her mind, and, childlike, her imagination ran riot.

At midnight, with her parents, she had attended mass in the great cathedral. The privilege of celebrating midnight mass on New Year's Eve was granted to the Mexicans by Pope Leo XIII. Hence, the Mexican churches are filled with devout people as they approach the threshold of the new year. On the first day of the year special services are held, on which occasion a pontifical mass is had, commencing at nine o'clock in the forenoon.

Early in the evening before this midnight service the Jiminez family had partaken of a supper prepared with unusual care and generosity, at which several guests, old and young, were welcome visitors. The intervening hours were occupied by cheerful conversation and

social games. In the latter you may be sure Juanita took an active and joyous part.

In the homes of some of Juanita's friends, where there was less observance of religious rites, entertainments and midnight suppers were given. Peculiar ceremonies were performed. When the cathedral clock struck midnight, the moment on which the old and the new hinged, a pretty girl from among the number present poured a bottle of champagne over a porcelain clock, thus christening the new year. Then the orchestra struck up and everybody danced.

In some other homes there was a more gruesome celebration of the passing of the old year. All the members of the company were dressed in black. Upon a table in the centre candles surrounded a small coffin, upon which was a clock set so as to stop when it reached the hour of midnight. At just that moment the clock was put into the coffin and buried

in the garden, or *patio*, as if it were a dead person.

Strange as it may seem, the Mexican children, as well as older people, found much fun in this ceremony, and after the mock funeral all engaged in dancing.

Throughout the place a noisy welcome was given to the new year. When the great bell struck the hour of twelve the entire city seemed to give a great throb. Bells all over the city took up the new story; steam whistles were let loose in all the factories, and, during the traditional five minutes that are supposed to cover the eternal confounding of the old and the exaltation of the new year, small boys went through the streets blowing horns and shooting off firecrackers.

Like the children of many lands, as well as like some children of a larger growth, Juanita made some good resolutions at the beginning of this new year. Among them was a purpose

to be helpful to those who were not so happily or so pleasantly situated.

She set about to carry out this purpose at once, and went to call on her friend, Rosa Alvarez, with the express purpose of inviting her home to dinner that day. This was entirely in keeping with the hospitable Mexican's idea of beginning the new year.

Juanita and Rosa were very close friends, though Rosa's father was a man of much more humble occupation than Señor Jiminez. He was a carpenter by trade. He earned $1.50 Mexican money per day, or about seventy-five cents in American currency. Her mother was an industrious woman, and in order to add to the income of the family, she took in laundry work.

The Alvarez family was, however, a happy one. The father was not given to pulque-drinking and gambling, like some of his neighbours, and he spent no money on lottery

tickets, cock-fights, or bull-fights. He was a plain, practical man, not given to extravagance, and, while some of his fellow workmen had their belongings in pawn most of the time, this industrious artisan was saving money, and rightly expected some day to exchange his *vivienda* (tenement flat) of four rooms for a home of his own in the suburbs of the city.

Juanita found Rosa at home. She well deserved the pretty name that had been given her. She was a girl ten years of age, with hair as black as the polished wing of a raven, deep dark eyes, and a complexion like a blush rose. Like many Mexican children, she also had pretty teeth. Juanita's own name had been given her because she was so petite and *simpatica*, the last a term that is scarcely translatable, but which means popular, lovable, etc.

Juanita also found at home Rosa's younger brother, Francisco, who was commonly called by his nickname, Panchito. He was invited

by Juanita to dine with Rosa at the Jiminez home.

You may be sure the invitation was gladly accepted, for rarely did they have an opportunity for such a pleasant time.

As Juanita ran along with her little friends, she stooped to pick a deep pink rosebud, which she laughingly pressed to the blushing cheek of her playmate as if to see which rose was the loveliest. Juanita was not as pretty as Rosa, but she was so entirely unselfish that no envy entered her happy thought.

The children gathered little yellow roses and red roses from Juanita's garden, entwining them with honeysuckle, and into the centre of the blooming, blushing flowers they set a couple of glorious gladioli.

"Come right into the house," said Juanita, as they arrived at the door of the Jiminez home. "It is now noon, and I think our dinner will be all ready. We are to eat by our-

selves, as papa is at the store and mamma is not in just now."

So Rosa and Panchito followed their hostess into the sunny dining-room, where they found the table well-laden with good things.

The tramp had given the children splendid appetites, and they enjoyed their dinner very much. Vegetable soup was first served, then egg omelette, with rice cooked with tomatoes. They had roasted veal and potatoes, with lettuce salad.

But the dish of the day was *mole*, a spicy food made up with turkey or chicken and prepared with a sauce which had numerous ingredients, such as tomatoes, chili peppers of two kinds, cloves, chocolate, cumin, raisins, almonds, garlic, and one or two other spices. It was eaten with tortillas, the flat unleavened bread of the lower classes in Mexico, which is just like the chupatties of India and other Eastern countries.

Then the children had a course of frijoles (Mexican beans), while the dessert was composed of fruit jellies and custards with seasoned gelatines. The sweetmeats were in fancy shapes, and Mexican children, like all others, are very fond of their dulces.

When the children had been given their dulces, Juanita suggested that they sit out upon the balcony, to which there was entrance from the dining-room through a low window. Here they could enjoy the fresh air and watch with childish pleasure the changing scenes of the Mexican street.

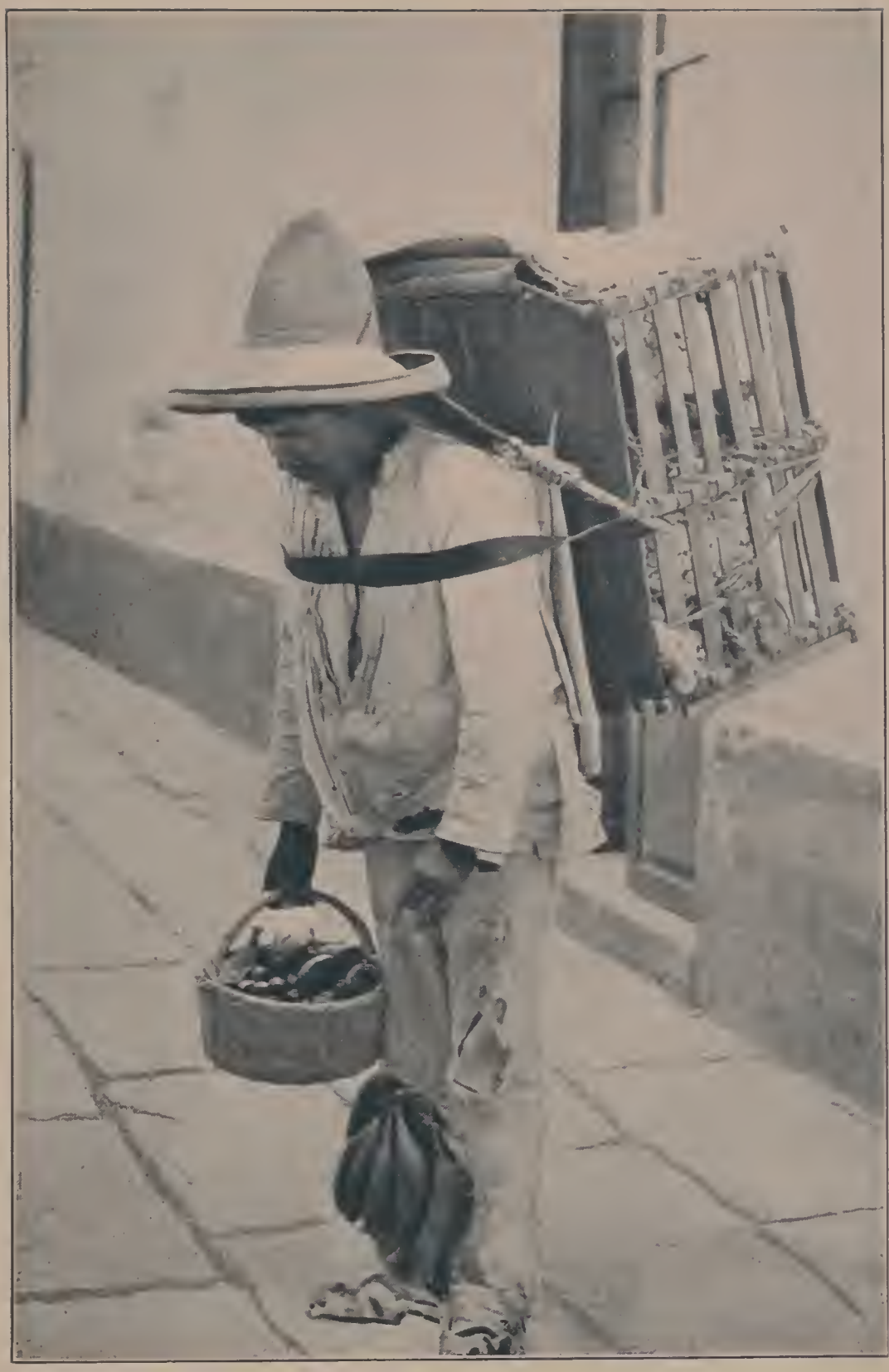
The children handed some of the dulces out through the bars of the balcony to the poor children who stood around suggestively. Dulces is the one word that carries more suggestion to the hearts of Mexican children than almost any other in their language.

The home-made candies which had been provided for Juanita and her friends were

made from Mexican sugar, which is the best in the world, though American sugar is imported for the manufacture of American confectionery. On all family or social occasions dulces are passed around on small trays or plates. Birthdays, saints' days, and dances are always thus sweetened. The native confectionery includes even fruits and sweet potatoes cooked in syrup and encrusted in sugar.

These Mexicans did not chew gum, though millions of pounds of the product of the zapote-tree are annually consumed by young Americans.

Among the children who were thus remembered by Juanita and her little friends were some newsboys. Newsboys were unknown in Mexico ten years ago, but these busy, noisy little fellows are now found everywhere. Poor, ragged, and often hungry, but always resourceful, this waif of the byways will shout the names of his papers, but is not allowed to yell their contents, as his American cousin does.



A FRUIT-VENDER.

Panchito knew very well how sharp was the Mexican newsboy's struggle for existence, for on some occasions he had sold papers himself. Like Panchito, many of these youngsters had parents living, but they took no more than a passing interest in their children.

The Mexican newsboy does not get his name registered in the accident books of the police. He is too wide-awake for that. Even among these children of five to seven years of age, the instinct of self-preservation is well-grounded, and the passing carriages and street-cars have no terrors for him. The street belongs to him, and no stray dog knows better than he the art of getting out of the road.

Their sweetmeats consumed, Rosa and Panchito remained with Juanita a part of the afternoon, passing the time in simple childish games. When they finally went to their more humble home, there were at least three very happy children in the City of Mexico.

CHAPTER II.

AT SCHOOL

"COME now, my little daughter, school begins to-day, and it is high time you were up and getting ready for it."

These were the first words Juanita heard on the Monday morning following New Year's Day. As she opened her eyes, she saw her mother's smiling face over her.

The girl knew that, though the face was pleasant and the tone a cheery one, her mother's words were not to be lightly regarded. So she quickly hopped out of bed and got ready for breakfast. She was the more willing to do this because, though she liked to play as well as any one, she loved to

go to school and enjoyed there the companionship of other children of her own age. She also appreciated the opportunity which was afforded her to learn those things which would help to make her life useful to herself and to others. Juanita was able to see how by faithful application to her studies she would be better enabled to carry out her new year's resolution of helpfulness to the less fortunate.

With a good-bye kiss from mamma, Juanita started in good season for the schoolhouse, which was only a few blocks distant. She went a little out of her way, however, to call for her friends, Rosa and Panchito.

There were about fifty children at the opening day. As they went in each boy or girl ran up to the teacher to salute her. The girls kissed her, and the boys bowed and said, "*Buenos dias*." They all brought her lovely flowers, from the elegant and expensive camellias and gardenias down to the poppies, dah-

lias, and daisies. Rich or poor, each pupil brought some floral offering to the teacher.

On this opening day the children found it hard to get down to routine work. That they might not get too uneasy, and thus disturb the order of the school, the teacher took a little time to tell them something about the early heroes of Mexican independence.

She said the spirit of independence, which is so manifest in England and America, was born in Mexico nearly as early as in its northern neighbour, with, perhaps, far greater reason for it.

"One of the earliest and most famous of our heroes," said the teacher, "was Hidalgo. His father was a farmer of Guanajuato, where Hidalgo was born in 1753. The boy was educated for the priesthood, and took holy orders in young manhood.

"Hidalgo set a good example to you children by improving his opportunities for educa-

tion, and, strangely enough, considering his surroundings, he acquired many liberal and advanced ideas. As he was a fearless man, he did not hesitate to make public his views concerning vital questions. For this he was denounced by his conservative and narrow-minded religious superiors.

"In 1810, Hidalgo, in company with Allende, a kindred spirit with similar notions of independence, at the head of eighty men, raised the cry, 'Down with false government!'

"A moblike army of fifty thousand men or more was soon formed, and succeeded in taking possession of Hidalgo's native city. Independence was declared, but this raw, undisciplined, poorly equipped army was no match for the forces of the Spanish government. The revolution was finally put down, and ended in Hidalgo's execution in the year 1811.

"Can any of you tell me," asked the teacher, "where Hidalgo's body lies?"

Up went several hands.

"You may tell us, Francisco."

"In the great cathedral in this city," was the boy's response.

"Yes, years after his execution, Hidalgo's body was raised and given solemn burial in Mexico's grandest shrine — just as in London Westminster Abbey has received the mortal remains of England's kings and heroes.

"But though crushed for the time being," continued the teacher, "the spirit of independence was not destroyed, and in later years other brave and intrepid leaders arose and led Mexico on in the march toward freedom.

"Many of them met shameful death at the hands of the Spanish rulers, but to-day Mexico honours their memory. Over the door of the birthplace of one of these martyrs, Agustin de

Yturbide, who was shot as a traitor, there is now placed the inscription:

"'LIBERTADOR DE MEXICO.'

"A later liberty-loving hero, who accomplished much, was President Benito Juarez. He is sometimes called the Lincoln of Mexico. He will always be held in reverence for his sublime career, and his life is a standing inspiration to Mexican boys. Until he was twelve years of age Juarez was a barefooted, bareheaded boy among the mountains of Oaxaca. He was born on a couch of straw in 1806, his cradle rocked by breezes and canopied with skies of eternal summer.

"But this Indian boy was good, and had the genius of gentleness as well as the armour of honesty and the courage of his convictions. Forced to the front by natural-born ability, the boy became a man upon whom the nation rested, a rock upon which the republic built.

"As the Magna Charta was forced by the best thought of England from a conservative king, so the Laws of Reform, proclaimed by Juarez in 1859, accomplished much for the poorer classes of our country."

Much more than this the teacher told to the school-children, who were so interested in the stories that they took no notice of the passing time. Nevertheless, they were glad when the closing signal was given, and, after filing to the street in an orderly manner, rushed to their homes to repeat to admiring parents the wonderful tales of Hidalgo and Yturbide and Juarez.

Happy days followed for the children, made joyous by their studious application and their ready obedience to the teacher. At half-past ten every day the boys had recess, after which the girls were given theirs.

For the information of the young reader, it may be said that education was made com-

pulsory in Mexico by President Diaz in 1891. Until that time there was no systematic work of the kind among the Mexican Indians.

The Aztecs had two classes of schools: the Calmecac, where the nobles received instruction in arts of war, and the Telpuchalli, where the people received instruction in history, eloquence, picture-writing, geography, and astronomy, highly tinctured with astrology. The discipline was very strict. These were mixed schools.

In the sixteenth century the Roman Catholic priests introduced writing and arithmetic along with their catechisms, a sort of forced growth. In the eighteenth century Viceroy Revillagigedo showed Mexico to have a population of four million, with only ten schools.

Later the Compañia Lancasteriana made an effort for uniform education in Mexico, and in 1896 their schools were taken up by the government of the republic. In 1895 in the

Federal District there were but three hundred people to the thousand who could read and write.

Schools of the primary grade are free, and children from six to sixteen years of age are obliged to attend. The compulsory studies are morals, civic duties, arithmetic, Spanish, reading, writing, elementary geometry, geography, elementary sciences, history of Mexico, and drawing and objective lessons. Corporal punishment is prohibited by law, and the teachers use moral suasion, detention after school-hours, lowering of marks, and suspension for a few days. There is scarcely any permanent expulsion.

CHAPTER III.

MAKING DRAWN-WORK

"MAMMA," said Juanita one day after school, "may I go over to Sarita's a little while? She says her mother will show me how to make drawn-work."

Juanita's mother knew that Señora Ortiz, Sarita's mother, was very skilful in all kinds of Mexican fancy work, and was willing that her daughter should learn how to use the needle and embroidery materials.

"Yes, you may go," said Señora Jiminez, "but you must not bother Sarita's mother about her work. You know that she is a widow and is obliged to support herself and her children by doing fancy work.

"This drawn-work which you want to learn

how to make is very popular with visitors from America and other countries, and Señora Ortiz sells much of it to them."

"All right, mamma, I'll remember what you say. Perhaps sometime I may be able to find customers for her. You know papa often brings American visitors to our house."

So through the streets Juanita hurried, and soon came to Sarita's home. This was even more humble than that of her friend Rosa. Here in three small rooms lived Señora Ortiz, together with her two daughters, Sarita and Maria, and her son Carlos. Sarita was thirteen years old, just the age of Juanita, and Carlos was eight. Maria, the baby of the family, was only three.

Juanita tapped at the door, which was quickly opened by her young friend, who greeted her with a hearty kiss. In the centre of the room was placed a large frame made of thin strips of board and mounted on four legs.

Over this frame was tightly stretched a piece of linen cloth.

At one side of the frame sat Sarita's mother, who gave Juanita a cordial welcome and invited her to take a seat opposite. At one end of the frame Sarita sat down, for she had become quite skilful in this work and gave her mother much help in the hours when she was not in school.

"Sarita has already told me," said Señora Ortiz, "that you want to learn how to make drawn-work. I am glad that you want to do this, for, if there is one thing in which Mexican women take pride, it is their skill in fancy work of all kinds."

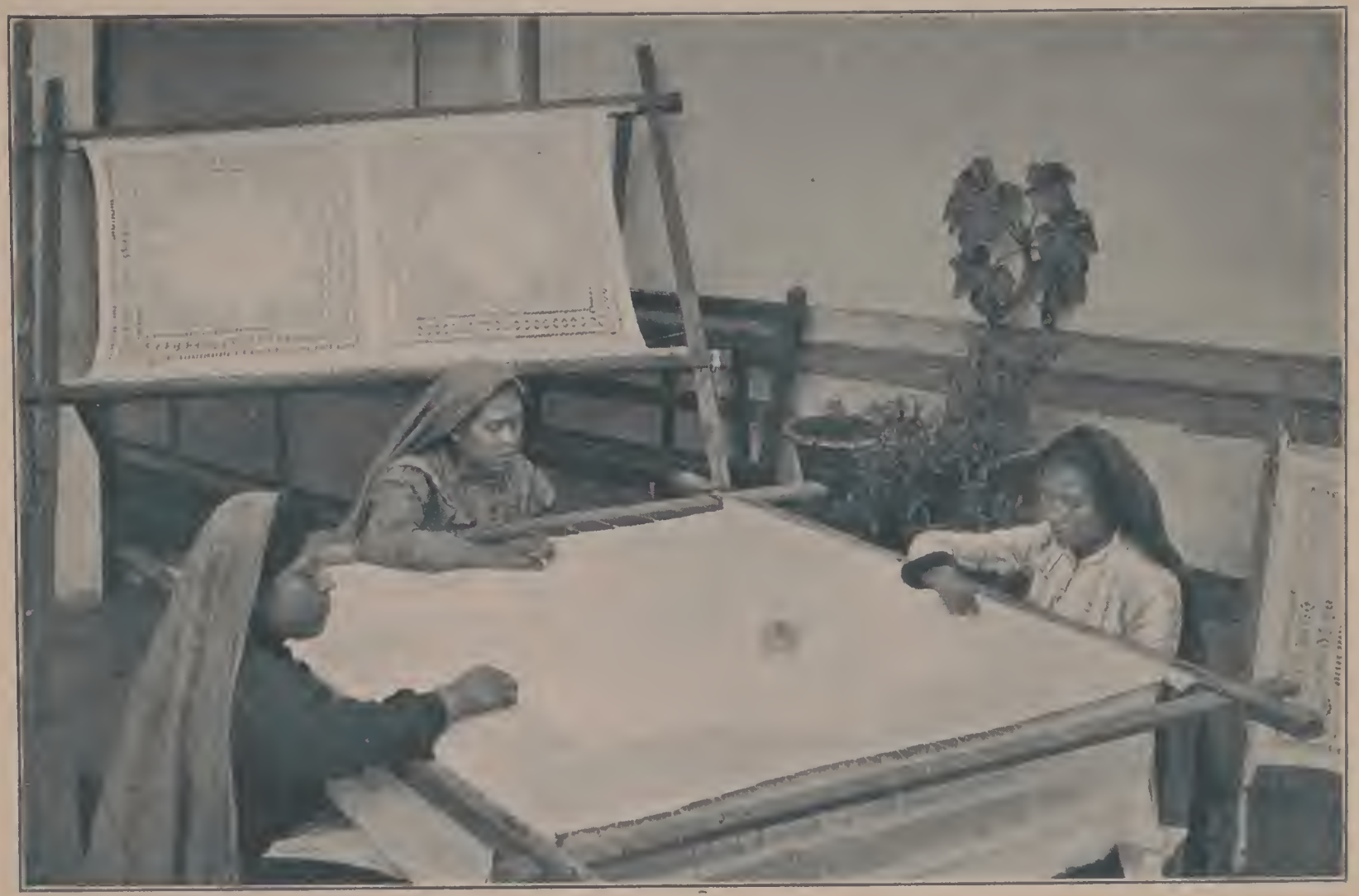
"We have a sewing teacher in school," said Juanita, "and I like to do the plain work she gives us, but I also want to learn to make the drawn-work. I am sure mamma will be very much pleased if I can do anything which will add to the beauty of our home furnishings.

Then perhaps sometime I may be able to make an altar-cloth for our church."

Señora Ortiz gave Juanita a few simple directions, explaining to her that she could not expect to do fine work for a long time, for it required experience as well as deftness. She set her to drawing threads in a portion of the linen where the work was comparatively plain.

"Drawing the threads is the fundamental work," the señora said. "This is slow and laborious, especially when the weave of the linen is fine. If a plain piece of cloth is used, the work is easier. The drawing of the threads prepares the background or field, upon which to operate. This is the mechanical part of the work.

"Then comes the designing upon the ground-work thus prepared. Combinations of straight lines and small curves, as in elementary penmanship, are used in the simpler work, but sometimes intricate designs are introduced.



MAKING DRAWN-WORK.

We often copy from flowers and scenery. One of the oldest patterns is the cross and crown, which is also one of the prettiest and most solid, for the weave is close and washes well. It consists of a Maltese cross and an ornamented ring alternating.

"Instead of the ring or crown, we sometimes leave a *cuadro* or block where the threads are not drawn. Another favourite design is the *paloma* or dove with outstretched wings, and the *espiga* or the ear of wheat design is much used, made in the form of a wreath. The daisy design is often combined with cross and crown. After you have had a little practice, I will show you how to work a forget-me-not pattern upon a handkerchief."

Juanita worked away faithfully under the directions given her for about an hour, Sarita and her mother meanwhile steadily toiling on. At the same time little Maria was playing about the room, watching her elders with her

sparkling black eyes, and prattling away as only a little child can.

At the end of the hour Juanita said: "I must go now, for mamma likes to have me at home at tea-time. I thank you very much for what you have shown me, and I hope you will let me come again."

"Indeed, we shall be glad to have you," said Señora Ortiz. "Sarita's friends are always welcome here. I know that she is specially fond of you."

Sarita blushed prettily at this, but she urgently added her own invitation to her mother's words.

Just before Juanita was to take her leave, Sarita's brother Carlos came rushing in, his olive-tinted cheeks aglow with excitement and his eyes sparkling under the wide brim of his tall, bell-crowned hat.

"Oh, mamma," he said, "I have just carried a valise from the railway station to the

Humboldt Hotel for an English gentleman, and he gave me twenty-five centavos. He says if I will come around to-morrow he will have some more errands for me."

Carlos was always greatly delighted when he was able to earn a little money, for it meant just so much more help and happiness for his hard-working mother. She was wise enough to sympathize and rejoice with her boy in all his successes, but she was also careful not to let his ambition to earn money interfere with his school work.

Bidding her friends good-bye, Juanita hastily passed out the door. As she walked up the street, she turned for a last look and caught a glimpse of little Maria throwing kisses after her.

The girl did not dally on her way home, though she saw much to interest her on the streets. Some of the sights excited her tender sympathies. Many little boys, much younger

than Juanita, were going about with heavy bundles on their backs, early in life being compelled to become *cargadores*, or burden-bearers, like their fathers.

If Juanita had been in some of the cities of Northern Mexico, where rain seldom falls, she would have seen boys acting as water-carriers. They carry two large cans of water hung on to a clumsy wooden yoke laid across the shoulders.

The donkey-boys were a more pleasant sight, and Juanita smiled as she saw them skilfully guiding the little beasts about the streets. No grown man could have handled them any better.

Soon, however, she arrived at her own home, where she found her papa returned from his store. Glad as she always was to see him, she was especially affectionate at this time, as she remembered that her friend Sarita had no father to love and cherish her.

Family relations in Mexico are very affectionate and close. The children live with their parents until they are married, meanwhile regarding all that is in the house as their very own. In this respect home life in Mexico is like home life in the East, as pictured in the parable of the prodigal son, where the father said to the murmuring brother, "All I have is thine."

Juanita, like the daughters in other Mexican homes, was watched with jealous care, and was known as "*pedazo del corazon*," or "piece of the heart," of the parents.

During the evening meal Juanita told her father what she had been doing during the day, — about the visit to Sarita, the lesson in making drawn-work, the poor little *cargadores*, the donkey-boys, as well as about her school work.

In this her father was always much interested, especially in her history lessons. He

often took occasion to tell her tales of the early history of Mexico. To-night he told her that Aztec mythology mentioned traditions of the flood, the ark, the dove, the green leaf, the temptation of Eve, and the subsequent sorrow.

He also told her of the pyramids of Mexico, which are said to be as old as those of Egypt, and are almost as large. The supposition that the Mexicans sprang from Asiatic races, who brought to this continent the old Biblical stories, is sustained by various authorities.

About the year 1500 B. C., the Olmecas, of Tartar origin, superseded the Mexican giants. They inhabited the table-lands, swarmed in its ghostly forests, and like wild birds lived upon its silent lakes.

After twenty centuries the Aztec shifted into the scene, drifting southward from the Californias. Half-hunter, half-fisherman, he reached Mexico, where his troubles began. He was

like an Ishmaelite. Five hundred years of wandering found him entering the Valley of Mexico, and it took him one hundred years to make the circuit of the valley from Texcoco to Chapultepec and from Tlaltelolco to Ixtapalapa.

In 1325 the Aztecs selected as the site of their city an island located between the present cathedral site and the plaza of Santo Domingo. Upon a rock they found the legendary eagle, its claws fastened upon the branch of a thorny cactus and in its beak a writhing serpent. Their little city was named Tenochtitlan.

Mexico City, which is built on the site of that ancient town, is really a great and beautiful city, created in 1523 by the Spaniards. In 1600 the city had only 15,000 people, 8,000 Aztecs and 7,000 Spaniards, but now its population is 450,000.

All this Señor Jiminez told Juanita while they ate their supper. Of course she asked

him a great many questions. She would have been very different from other children if she had not. A promise was given that she might soon visit the National Museum, where she would see many relics of the time of the Aztecs.

CHAPTER IV.

A DINNER AND A RIDE

KINGS' DAY, one of the brightest religious feast-days in Mexico, occurs in January. In the calendar of the Roman Catholic Church it is set aside for the adoration of the Gentile Kings or Wise Men, Gaspar, Melchor, and Baltazar, who were led by the star in the east to Bethlehem.

This feast of the Epiphany is observed in the churches with unusual services; at the cathedral there is solemn high mass at nine o'clock. Mexican flags hang from the big dome and vaulted roofs, and appropriate sermons are preached.

Aside from the religious observance of the holiday, there was much social gaiety, and our

young people had a large share in the good times.

Juanita's mother made plans to entertain at dinner a number of her friends. As she did not believe in shutting the children out of the good times, she told her daughter that she could ask several of her schoolmates. Naturally, Juanita invited the boys and girls with whom we have become acquainted, — Rosa and Panchito Alvarez and Carlos and Sarita Ortiz. In addition, Señora Jiminez sent invitations to Señor Alvarez and to Señoras Alvarez and Ortiz. Of course little Maria was not left out.

Impatiently Juanita waited for the time to pass before the party. She was the more impatient because papa had thrown out several hints that he was preparing a splendid surprise to follow the dinner.

No matter how much she teased her father, she could not get him to reveal the secret.

He only smiled broadly, and put on a very mysterious look. Juanita tried again and again to guess what it might be, but all to no purpose. The secret could not be discovered.

She talked with Sarita and Rosa about it, and even asked Panchito and Carlos what they supposed it could be; but the girls could only give vague guesses, and the boys put on a very superior air, saying they were not interested in secrets, anyway.

If the truth were known, when the boys got by themselves, they puzzled and guessed as much as the girls, but it would never do for them to own that they were at all curious — oh, no!

So there was nothing to do but to wait for the secret to reveal itself at its own good pleasure. Slowly the time passed, but at last the holiday came, and with it the friends who were to dine with the Jiminez family.

Two tables were set for the dinner. At one

the grown members of the party were seated. At the other sat the young folks, with Juanita as hostess, and Panchito on her right.

The tables fairly groaned with the good things that were placed upon them, and both young and old did full justice to them. What most interested Juanita and her friends, though, was the cake that was served as dessert.

In many Mexican homes that day a large cake in the shape of a crown was provided. This was cut in as many slices as there were people present. A bean was hidden in the Kings' Cake, which naturally some one in the party would draw. That person would have to give a party and dance to the rest within a stated time. This dance is called *baile de los compadres.*

Señora Jiminez had provided no such cake for her own table because some of her guests would have been unable to give a party to such a company of people. But before the children

a beautiful Kings' Cake had been placed. It was cut into five pieces, and to the finder of the hidden bean Señor Jiminez had promised a prize or reward.

"Oh, I hope I shall win," said Carlos, with just a tinge of covetousness in his tone.

Sarita, who sat beside him, said nothing, but gave him a rebuking look for the ill-mannered speech.

"I mean, I—" But Carlos did not know how to qualify his remark, so he merely hung his head and looked ashamed.

Juanita, sorry for the embarrassment of her guest, said: "Of course we all want to find the bean, but shall also all be glad to congratulate the lucky winner."

At this, she passed to each one a piece of the fateful cake. For a few moments not a word was said. As each one ate there was anxious search for the hidden bean. Finally,

when the cake was nearly all eaten, a joyful cry was given and Sarita was heard to say, "I have it! I have it!"

Meanwhile, the older people at the other table had finished their meal and were looking on with much interest. When Señor Jiminez saw that Sarita was the fortunate one, he called her to him.

"I am going to tell you children now what the great secret is, but first will you please step to that window?" asked the señor, indicating the one which commanded the street and the front entrance.

Sarita did as requested. A look of surprise came over her face, but she said nothing.

"What do you see?"

"A pair of fine horses."

"What else?"

"A three-seated carriage."

"Anything else?"

"Yes; a coachman."

"Now I will tell you that the secret is a ride for all you children to the Alameda."

"Oh, isn't that splendid?"

"Fine!"

"Great!"

These were the exclamations from the girls and boys.

"But, papa, what about Sarita's prize?" asked Juanita.

"Oh, I nearly forgot. She is to sit on the front seat with me."

Sarita thought that was a splendid reward for her lucky find, and thanked Señor Jiminez in her prettiest manner.

Before long Señor Jiminez and his gay young party were seated in the roomy and comfortable carriage, Sarita by his side on the front seat. Carlos and Panchito occupied the second seat, and Juanita and Rosa sat in the rear.

The older members of the party remained

with Señora Jiminez while her husband took the children to ride.

For Juanita, this going to ride with her father was no new experience, but for the others it was an extraordinary occasion, and the mere sensation of riding behind two such fine horses was too pleasant to describe. The sights along the streets seemed very different to them than they had in previous days when they were on foot.

Many were the questions they asked of each other, and Señor Jiminez took pains to point out the objects of interest as he drove slowly along.

Perhaps nothing on the way excited more comment than a quaint palace built of blue and white tiles.

"That house," said Señor Jiminez, "was built over a hundred years ago, and there is a queer story about it.

"It seems that a certain rich man had a son.

The son was extravagant in his habits and squandered the money which his father allowed him.

"Finally the father's patience was exhausted, and he refused to provide a further supply of funds for his son. At the same time he gave him a severe lecture, winding up with an old Spanish proverb about the inability of spendthrifts to build porcelain palaces.

"Now, with all his bad habits, the young man had a certain amount of pride, and he told his father that he could keep his old money. He would ask no more favours of him, anyway.

"So the son took his departure for parts unknown. For several years his father saw nothing of him.

"Finally, after a long time, a messenger called at the father's house with a note requesting him to come to a certain street and number to meet an old acquaintance. On arriving at

the place indicated, he found that it was this very place. In the reception-hall he found his son, who gave him a warm greeting and bade him look over the establishment. He also reminded his father of what he had said about spendthrifts and porcelain palaces.

"Of course the old gentleman was much surprised when he learned that his son was the builder of this palace, but he was none the less gratified at the young man's success."

"But where did the son get his money?" asked the practical Carlos.

"That part of the story we do not know," was the answer; "but we do know that that was a time of pirates and brigands, and I guess the old gentleman didn't care to investigate too closely the source of his son's fortune."

Many other beautiful and grand sights were seen along the way, as well as some that were picturesque and quaint. Often the pity as well as the curiosity of the children was excited,

especially when they drove through some of the poorer streets. Even Carlos and Sarita knew little of the depth of poverty and wretchedness in some parts of the city.

After awhile our party arrived at the Alameda. As they entered the park, Señor Jiminez told something of its history. To Juanita, the story was not unknown, but the other children heard it for the first time.

"For over three hundred years," said Juanita's father, "the Alameda has been not only a big breathing-place for the people of the capital, but its chief pleasure park. It was laid out in 1592 under Viceroy Luis de Velasco, and alamos and cottonwood trees were planted; hence the name Alameda. The park used to be enclosed in a stone wall, but this was removed in 1885.

"Long years ago, when the Inquisition prevailed in Mexico, there were executions on the grounds now occupied by the western end of

the Alameda. But those cruel chapters in Mexican history are well-nigh forgotten, and now we see no outward trace of the Inquisition."

But the glorious sight which presented itself to the vision of the children made these old stories of cruelty seem like a dream. The only realities to them were the beautiful green grass, the thick foliage of the waving trees, through which was caught an occasional glimpse of blue sky, and, above all, the ever moving panorama of life which passed before them.

Many a time, on a Thursday or Sunday forenoon, the children had visited the park to hear the military band play and to see the crowds of people. But never had the Alameda presented such a sight to them as on this holiday.

Hundreds of fine carriages and automobiles passed back and forth. In them were seated the most noted people of the city. Many of

the men were dressed in military uniforms profusely decorated with gold lace, while the women were dressed in the most elaborate costumes the country could produce.

Then there were the multitudes of people on foot, laughing and chatting with each other or gazing at the passers-by in their carriages.

Señor Jiminez was kept busy telling his young people the names of prominent people who rode by. As they were jogging slowly along he suddenly said:

"Look quickly, children. See that carriage coming toward us in which is riding the sturdy, military-looking man with gray hair and moustache."

"The one with plumed hat and so many badges, and who bows to so many people?" asked Sarita.

"The very one. That is President Diaz. You all want to get a good look at him; for though he is a sturdy, strong man, he is getting

along in years, and you probably will not have many opportunities to see him.

"I want you to know that Mexico owes a large part of her present peace and prosperity to that man. Our country had practically no railroads until after General Diaz became President.

"He is a living example of the possibilities of the Mexican youth. Although he was born in an obscure corner of the country, in the city of Oaxaca, by successfully meeting new conditions as they presented themselves, he not only improved himself, but lifted his country out of the condition of chronic revolution under which it had suffered from the time of its emancipation from Spain, in the year 1821, until the year 1874, when the last revolutionary attempt ended.

"Much of the success for good that has followed the career of President Diaz was due to his boyhood training. His father and mother,

PRESIDENT DIAZ.

although not well-to-do people, were industrious, frugal, and conscientious in giving young Porfirio as good an education as they could.

"As a lad he wanted to enter the army, but his parents placed him in the seminary to study for the priesthood. This did not suit him, and he studied law. Later he entered the Mexican army and became one of the most illustrious soldiers of the republic.

"When General Diaz became President, Mexico was so isolated from the United States that there were only about a dozen English-speaking people in the City of Mexico, while now in the city and vicinity are about four thousand Americans and English.

"A truer patriot never lived, and at times when funds were scarce in the government treasury, President Diaz has thrown off half his salary, which also was done by hundreds of patriotic statesmen, and the financial difficulties were successfully overcome."

Carlos and Panchito were especially interested in Señor Jiminez's talk about Diaz, and they gazed after the President's retreating carriage till it was out of sight.

Meanwhile they continued on their way around the park, and came to the Paseo, or boulevard, leading to Chapultepec. At the head of the street stands the great statue of Charles IV.

"That statue," said Señor Jiminez, "has only one superior in the world, that of Marcus Aurelius in Rome. This one is about twenty-two feet in height and weighs forty-five thousand pounds. It is so big that twenty men, it is said, can be stuffed into its stomach of bronze, which has led the common people of Mexico to call it the 'Horse of Troy.' It was made by Manuel Tolsa, the great architect and sculptor, who built the massive School of Mines."

After riding a little way along the boulevard,

the horses were turned homeward. The ride back furnished many new and interesting sights, as they drove by a different route.

The young folks were very profuse in their thanks for the afternoon's outing, and all, both young and old, felt that the day had been happily and wisely spent.

CHAPTER V.

A VISIT TO POPOCATEPETL

THE next day Juanita and her friends had to return to school. This was rather irksome to some of them after the holiday, but it did not take them long to get back into the routine of school life.

Juanita was the more willing to apply herself closely to her studies, for her father had promised her that on Carmen Day, if she got on well with lessons meanwhile, he would take her mother and her on a trip to Amecameca and Mt. Popocatepetl.

This was an excursion they had all longed to take for a good while, but of course Juanita was especially enthusiastic over the prospect. She was bound that it should be no fault of

hers if there were any failure in the plans. So her teacher was really surprised at the attention she bestowed on her lessons.

Holidays are frequent in Mexico, and before Carmen Day, which falls on February 17th, Candlemas Day was celebrated.

In the United States the day is profanely confounded with Ground Hog Day, but in Mexico no such custom prevails. It is known as a double-cross festival and occurs forty days after Christmas.

Commencing two days before, candles are placed at the altars of the Virgin and kept burning constantly before the pictures, big and little, of that highly honoured woman. In the churches processions with lighted candles march back and forth, and all candles needed for the churches for the ensuing year are blessed; hence the name Candlemas Day.

But Carmen Day arrived at last, though to Juanita some of the days lagged dreadfully.

The holiday is observed as the festival of Our Lady of Carmen, especially in the Carmen District of the city. It is the saint's day of the wife of President Diaz, who receives gifts and visits and beautiful flowers.

Juanita awoke bright and early. She needed no one to call her this morning.

Quickly she hopped out of bed and ran to her window to have a look at the sky. Clear as crystal and blue as blue could be, with the morning sun casting its radiant beams over the city with a glory and beauty exceeded nowhere. Mexico's clear atmosphere and blue sky are rivalled only in Italy. Consequently Mexico is sometimes called the Italy of America.

In a very few moments — much quicker than usual — Juanita was dressed, and promptly at breakfast-time she appeared in the dining-room, where her mamma and papa had just preceded her. She could hardly stop to give

them the usual morning greeting before she said:

"Papa, are we surely going to Amecameca to-day?"

"We certainly are," was the answer, "if the train goes."

Juanita did not need her mother's injunction not to loiter over her breakfast. Of necessity they all ate rapidly — perhaps too rapidly, for shortly before seven o'clock the maid told them that the carriage which was to convey them to the railway station was at the door.

Ordinarily they would have taken the street-cars, but as the street-car service in the city was rather unreliable, they did not dare to trust to it when after an early train.

Quickly donning their outer garments, Juanita and her parents got into the carriage, which drove off rapidly to the railway station. Here they arrived just in time to catch the 7.10 train for Amecameca.

It was a comparatively new experience for Juanita to ride upon a railway train. Only a few times had she been out short distances with her father or mother.

So every changing scene was a revelation to her, and as the train sped on through Ayotla and Santa Barbara she saw much to interest her, and she kept her parents busy answering the questions she asked them.

As they got farther into the country, the green fields afforded a beautiful and refreshing sight. In some places, though, there were long stretches of barren soil which bore nothing but different varieties of the cactus. Among them the century plant, or American aloe, was often seen. Its bluish-green leaves were long, with prickly edges, and there were immense clusters of yellowish flowers. The branches were sometimes forty feet high.

Again, Juanita would see the great maguey plantations, from which plant is made pulque,

ON A MAGUEY PLANTATION.

the national drink of Mexico. She already knew that pulque-drinking was a terrible curse to the country, and she learned from her father that if its sale were prohibited it would mean the ruin of thousands of owners of these maguey plantations. At least, that was what they said; but, even if it were true, the poorer classes of the people would be incalculably benefited, as they spend $20,000 a day on the liquor.

But the train kept steadily on. La Compañia was passed, and Temamatla in its turn. Then Tenango and Tepopula were left behind. Finally, at quarter-past nine, the trainman shouted "Amecameca," and without delay Juanita and her parents left the cars.

They were immediately surrounded by a crowd of donkey-boys, who besought the privilege of acting as guide.

Beckoning to one of the brightest appearing lads, Señor Jiminez placed in his hand a silver

coin and told him that he wanted three donkeys, — one for the señora, one for the señorita, and one for himself to ride.

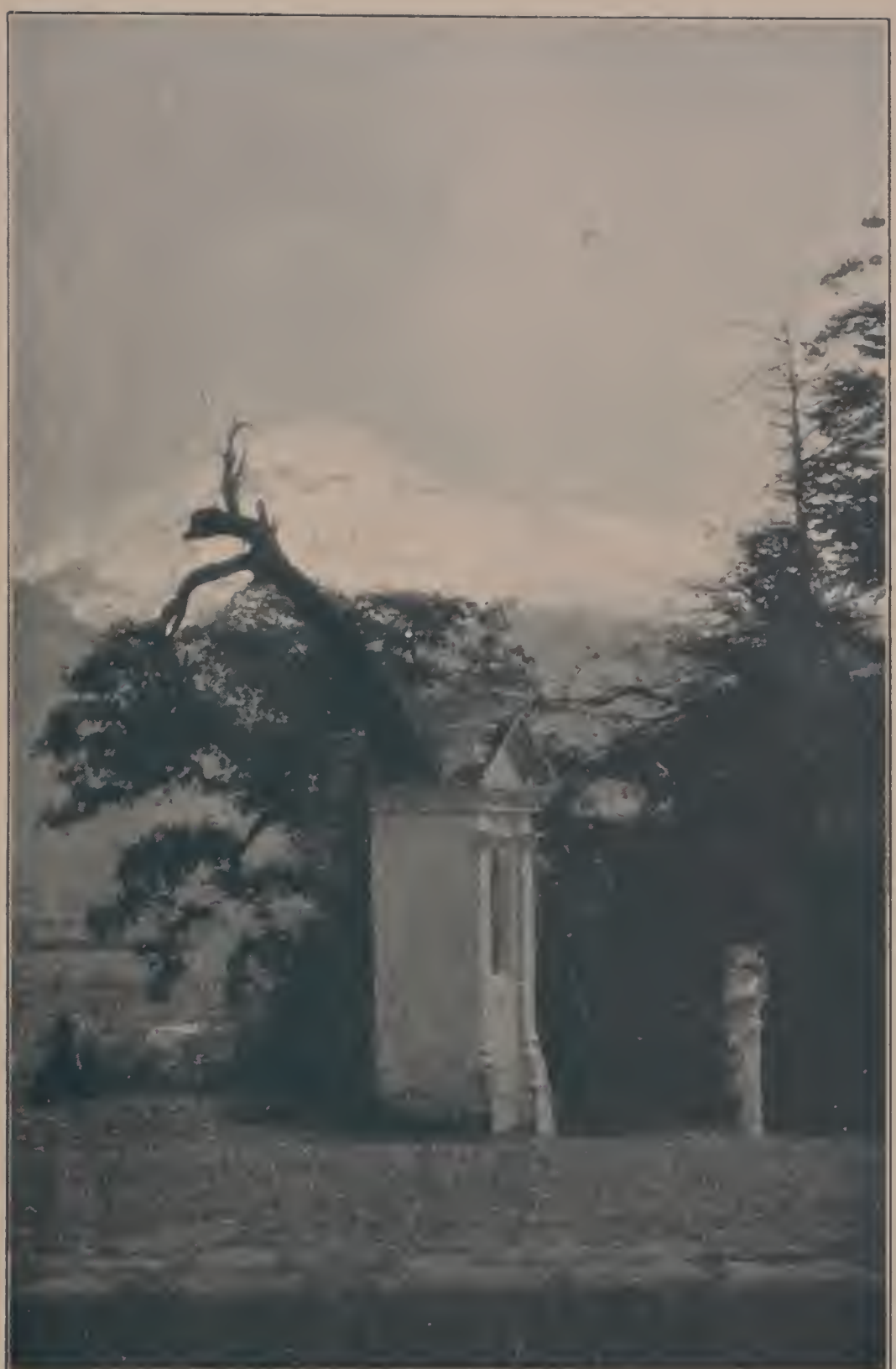
With a broad smile and flourishing bow young Juan said:

"You shall have them at once, your Excellency."

He went at once to a near-by shed, and in less time than it takes to tell it returned with the desired animals all saddled and bridled for his party.

"Now we want you to lead us by the best way to Mt. Popocatepetl," said Señor Jiminez. "Of course we do not expect to ascend it to-day, for we have not made preparations for that; neither have we the time."

"Yes, señor, I understand," said Juan. "I show many people the way. I take you where you get the grand view. Then you ride across the valley to the low hills, where you find a resting-place and get some dinner. Yes,



"THE WONDERFUL VISION OF THE VOLCANO POPOCATEPETL."

señor, I know." And again Juan doffed his broad-brimmed hat and showed a long, even row of white teeth in his inimitable smile.

So, after all were safely mounted on the little but sturdy beasts, they passed on away from the little cluster of houses that surrounded the station.

They had gone but a little way, when, as they turned a corner, the wonderful vision of the volcano Popocatepetl burst upon their sight.

At once they halted, and in silence they gazed upon it. It was too grand, too awe-inspiring, for any words. Even to Señor and Señora Jiminez, who had seen the mountain many times before, it was an entrancing view — one of those sights which, though old, is ever new.

It was a picture that would ever haunt the memory.

Against the foreground were the pin and

needle branches of the pines and cedars of Amecameca, the latter brought as saplings from the forests of Lebanon centuries ago by the Spanish conquerors, and which now are large trees. In the centre of this wonderful picture, like a flattened mosaic, was the tiled town of Amecameca, while fixed against the horizon was the cold white brow of the volcano with its crown of snow, a crown sent down from heaven.

Between the town and mountain stretched before them a wide valley, fertile, and dotted with numerous haciendas. Beyond, and beneath the great peak, stood the foot-hills, sparsely inhabited and affording a poor living to those who dwelt among them.

Señor Jiminez explained to his daughter that the mountain was over three miles above the level of the sea, and that the crater, which was three miles in circumference, was over one thousand feet in depth.

After gazing on the wonderful sight for a long time, the señor ordered the donkey-boy to lead on, and they took up their march across the valley to the foot-hills.

There was little conversation on the way, so majestic was the view constantly before them. They rode on and on over the winding, dusty roads until our friends had inward feelings that it must be dinner-time.

"When are we to get our dinner, papa?" asked Juanita.

"That's what I have been wondering, too," said mamma.

"I was just thinking it was time to find out," said Señor Jiminez. "Juan, when are we to get that dinner you promised us?"

"Very soon, señor. Just after we get over this hill," was the smiling response.

And sure enough, as the donkeys passed over the crown of the hill there came into sight an adobe hut of moderate size, sur-

rounded by the low green shrubbery of the locality.

As they halted before the hut, there appeared on the scene an Indian woman and a whole swarm of scantily clad children. These Juan proudly introduced as his mother and brothers and sisters. His father, he said, was at work on a plantation down in the valley. They were all as proud of their Aztec origin as Juanita was of her Castilian forefathers.

Though all the children of this family seemed happy and contented, as Juanita's father told her afterward, life among the Indian babies is not always smooth. They are survivors of a race long relegated to the past, and yet they carry with them all the pathos and the dignity that surrounded the best of them.

The Indian babies are the most pathetic things in the world. Although reflecting life, they seem like bundles of dead matter, so

quiet are they in their misery. In Mexico, as soon as possible after birth, the Indian baby is rolled in a zarape or blanket, and the load is carried on the back of the plodding mother as she comes into the capital with her vegetables and flowers, while the father trudges ahead with his own load. This baby cries little or none, and simply seems to vegetate. But as he is free from the restraint of extra clothing he toughens from day to day like a little animal, and, as a rule, the Mexican babies are well formed and healthy.

As he grows up life is never serious to him. As a boy the baby follows his father's trade and the girl's thought follows the slowly unfolding and uneventful life of the mother.

"Mother," said Juan, "the señor and his family are very hungry. It is a long time since they had breakfast, and they have come on a long journey, — all the way from the great city. Can you give them a dinner?"

"Why, certainly, if they are willing to put up with what I can give them," was the reply.

"We are hungry enough to eat almost anything," said Señora Jiminez.

"Oh, mother, this is like a regular picnic, to come out here and have dinner, isn't it?" said Juanita.

"Indeed it is, only better, for we have not got to bother with preparing the lunch," was the reply.

Meanwhile, all had alighted from their donkeys, which Juan led away and tethered where they could get generous forage.

At the same time the Indian mother set about preparing the meal for her guests.

The visitors seated themselves upon the ground in front of the hut. In a few moments Juan returned and proceeded to set up on two benches a rough table of boards which were lying about.

Before very long the rude table was set with

MAKING TORTILLAS

such viands as the Indian woman was able to produce, and the Jiminez family invited to partake. It was a very different sort of meal from their usual ones at home, but hunger is a splendid appetizer, and they ate with a relish the frijoles and tortillas.

Tortillas are similar to the unleavened bread of the East. They are made from corn put into lime-water and boiled half an hour. The husks are then removed and the ears washed with cold water. The corn is ground by hand on a stone metate, and the dough broken into pieces is formed into round cakes about six inches in diameter and one-eighth of an inch thick.

Juanita would have been much interested if she could have seen Juan's mother and older sister slowly and laboriously grinding the corn.

The tortilla is toasted until it is brown, and it is as necessary to Mexican tables as bread

to the American. The Mexicans take up their spicy dishes with the tortilla, using it as a spoon, and finally they eat the spoon!

When prepared according to the Mexican method frijoles are very palatable, and rich and poor eat these brown beans with gusto. The principal varieties of frijoles are the *valle gorda* and the *valle chica*.

The beans are put into a pot and covered with water, and boiled four hours, more water being constantly added. They are then fried in lard and eaten with their own gravy, or mashed and fried with onions.

Corn is the staff of life for these Mexican Indians, and is served in many forms, often highly seasoned with the chili. Of the three kinds of tamales the best are those prepared with chili. Some were served for Juanita and her parents. The corn is ground very fine; the dough is prepared in one vessel and the meat in another, the latter being seasoned.

Fresh corn husks are used. These are washed clean and the inside lined with the dough. Finely minced meat is placed inside, and the husks rolled like a big cigarette. They are then boiled an hour and eaten hot.

All the while our friends were feasting their bodies they were also feasting their eyes upon the majestic Popocatepetl, which towered above them in all its snowy, glittering grandeur. They could not help thinking how terrible would be the result if suddenly from its crater should belch forth the fires so long extinct.

It was no unknown thing for Mexican volcanoes to do just that thing. Señor Jiminez told how, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the site of the volcano Jorullo was covered with fields of cotton, indigo, sugar-cane, all made fertile by generous irrigation. Suddenly, without warning, the mountain cast forth a stream of lava and fire, laying waste the land, and changing the beautiful green landscape

to a burning, desolate wilderness. Thousands of dollars' worth of property were destroyed and many lives lost in the catastrophe.

This was rather a depressing story, and Juanita was a little nervous after hearing it, but her spirits were soon restored as she watched the antics and games of the little Indian children as they played about the hut.

The meal ended, Señor Jiminez gave Juan's mother generous payment. Then he said to his wife and daughter, with a glance at the declining sun, "We must now be starting for home. The train leaves Amecameca at about quarter of five, and if we go now we can make it without hurrying the donkeys."

Juan overheard the remark and took the hint without further orders. He soon brought up the donkeys, who also were rested and refreshed by their noonday meal.

At once the travellers mounted and took up their line of march back over the morning's

trail, down the hills into the valley, and up again into the town of Amecameca. Here they arrived in ample time for their train, which rapidly whirled them once more to their beautiful City of Mexico. At seven o'clock they were home again and eager for the supper which the cook had ready upon the table.

Though the day had been a happy one for Juanita, it had also been fatiguing, and she needed no urging to go early to bed. But she did not fail to give mamma and papa their good-night kiss and to thank them over and over for her splendid outing — one that she would never forget.

CHAPTER VI.

SIGHT - SEEING

For several weeks Juanita's life moved on with little incident to call for special mention. She went to school as usual, called on her young friends, at Sarita's making considerable progress in learning drawn-work.

One day, late in the spring, she was invited to the home of Rosa and Panchito to see a wonderful sight, — the arrival of a little stranger who would make them a long visit. The Alvarez children were wild with delight over the baby sister.

A week later the grandmother and the happy children took the little one to the civil register and entered her arrival. It wore its best clothes on that occasion.

Two weeks afterward there was a baptism. The family took their new treasure to the nearest church. The *padrinos*, or godfather and godmother, were important personages on that occasion. The entrance to the church was crowded with poor people who had learned that a christening was to occur. Juanita and Sarita and Carlos were present, as well as a number of other friends who had been invited by card.

The father handed the priest five pesos for himself and his assistants. The priest then recited in Latin from the ritual, afterward calling the name of the child, Ramona. After pouring some water on the baby's head and neck, the priest rubbed the neck and the little mouth with salt, and pronounced the benediction, thus completing the ceremony.

As the small party left the church, the crowd of poor people called out "*El Bolo, El Bolo.*" Then the godfather gave each a centavo or

two, all new coins which he had brought for that purpose. After the baptismal supper candies were served and cards with coins given as souvenirs.

To Juanita all this was a new and delightful experience, and it formed a topic of conversation with her and her friends for a long time.

Soon after the pretty baptismal ceremony and while Ramona was a baby in arms, Juanita became acquainted with two American girls, Grace and Louise Winthrop, daughters of an American merchant who was visiting Mexico on business, and who had thus met Señor Jiminez.

The girls were curious to see the sights of Mexico, so a little party was made up, including Florence Mason, also an American girl, who was born in Mexico and who acted as interpreter between the children. Sarita and Rosa were in the party, also Carlos and Panchito, their brothers.

First they visited the national palace, which stands on the site of the "new house" of Montezuma. The old-time cedar ceilings put in place by Cortez are disappearing, giving place to rich frescoes and rare furnishings, and elevators are taking the place of the broad stone stairs. The offices of President Diaz are in the palace, and there he holds public receptions.

The children gazed with a good deal of interest on the portraits of historic personages hung in the palace, and the two American girls were especially delighted to see a painting of Washington among them.

In the same block, which is six hundred feet square, are two barracks for soldiers and the fire brigade. On the front are three large entrances open all day to the public.

Next they visited the "Thieves' Market," to the south of the palace, where the rarest of things may be purchased.

To the American girls the strange scenes and customs were a continual source of delight. On the street they saw all kinds of costumes, — the cavalier clad in buckskin pantaloons seamed with double rows of silver or gold coins, wearing gay vests, sombreros, and clanking spurs; elegantly gowned señoritas in flashing carriages and swift automobiles; soldiers in brilliant uniforms; and an occasional Aztec girl added novelty to the scene.

But the National Museum was the chief object of attraction for our party at this time. Here they saw the famous Aztec calendar stone and other curiosities and relics of centuries of ancient Mexican history. Here also they saw some very interesting objects pertaining to modern history, such as Maximilian's gala coach, his silver service, etc.

The boys were particularly attracted to the mementos of the unfortunate Maximilian.

An old attendant standing near observed their interest, and said to them, "Ah, he was the brave man!"

Observing the look of inquiry on the boys' faces at his exclamation, the old man proceeded to tell them how he had been a soldier in the patriot army of Mexico in the time of the emperor. He had witnessed Maximilian's death, and had seen him give the gold coins to the soldiers who acted as his executioners.

Like many of the Mexican opponents of Maximilian and his government, the old man's feeling for the dead emperor was one of pity rather than hatred, and many a tear is shed in Mexico to-day over the sad fate of the unfortunate Empress Carlotta, — driven mad by her misfortunes.

The old man, made bold by the attention of the boys, led the party of young people about the museum, pointing out here and there the most interesting objects. Many of

the stories of the Aztecs and the Spanish viceroys of old time he was able to tell.

"That," pointing to an antique sword hung upon the wall, "was the property of the Viceroy Revillagigedo."

"What a name! How did they ever pronounce it?" put in one of the American girls.

"This viceroy ruled here in 1787," continued the attendant, not noticing the interruption. "He was famous for his unusual sense of justice. On one occasion a certain Indian had found a bag of golden ounces. The Indian was an honest man, and, discovering the owner to be a Spanish gentleman, he returned the gold to him.

"The Spaniard was not so honest, and, as the bag was returned to him, he quietly slipped two gold pieces into his pocket. Then, instead of rewarding him, he charged the Indian with theft, and kicked him out of the house.

"The Indian saw through the Spaniard's scheme to defraud him of a fairly earned reward, and complained to the viceroy, who called the two men before him. He asked the Spaniard:

"'How many ounces were in the bag you lost?'

"'Twenty-eight.'

"'How many ounces in the bag now?' was the second question.

"'Twenty-six.'

"'Very good. It's a clear case. If the Indian had been a thief, he would not have brought the bag back to you at all. It must belong to some one else.'

"With this conclusion, the viceroy, sweeping up the gold from the table before him, gave the whole thing back to the Indian."

"Good for Revillagigedo!" said Panchito, as the guard finished his story.

"I think we had better be going home

now," said Juanita, "but first let's go with Louise and Grace to their hotel."

Thanking the old man for his kindness, they all hastened out of the building to the street. They decided to take a car, as the hotel was some ways from the museum. They had to wait quite awhile for the car on account of the peculiar system of running street-cars in the city.

They all start from a common point in the centre. After running for a couple of blocks or so, they switch off to the right or left, as the case may be. This is convenient for the stranger, because it makes no difference where he takes a car, he will inevitably get back to the locality of his hotel, if he will sit still long enough.

The time-table, however, is peculiar. For some reason no arriving car is permitted to leave the central point until a certain number have collected. It is a daily thing to see

scores of cars waiting for the signal, while all over the city people are standing on corners waiting patiently for transportation to heave in sight.

At last, however, their car appeared, and Juanita and her friends clambered aboard. On the way to the hotel they passed, among other notable institutions, the Home for the Poor Working Boys, which was opened in 1898, and is one of the unique charities of the city, having graduated fifteen hundred boys. The organizer and manager of the home is Rev. A. M. Hunt-Cortez. He is known among the Mexican Indians as "The White Indian," a title he appreciates more than a crown of gold, for it enables him not only to demonstrate his own kindly spirit, but also to bring out the best elements among the boys in his control.

In this home, Carlos told the girls, Father Hunt places the poor boys he picks up on

the streets, and educates them and feeds and clothes them with funds which are voluntarily given. He makes an effort to educate the boys in the original tongue of the Aztecs, which he says is too rich a language to be allowed to perish. He does not, however, neglect reading, writing, and religious education.

Although the institution is sustained at an expense of about fifty pesos per day, the good priest has such a firm hold on God, as the Provider, that the needs have been met and the mission of this good man so far has been crowned with great success.

CHAPTER VII.

FEASTS AND FLOWERS

The religious ceremonies of Lent were faithfully observed by Juanita's parents. Consequently she, too, was true to the training she had received. On Palm Sunday, in company with her friends, she carried to church palm leaves that had been plaited in various designs, to have them blessed by the priest. These were afterward fastened to the balconies, doors, bedsteads, and other places at home to keep off evil spirits.

On Good Friday Juanita went with her parents to the great cathedral, where the archbishop officiated before an immense crowd.

On the same day, in the suburban towns of

Ixtapalapa, Atzcapotzalco, and Coyoacan there were processions in the yards of the country churches, where highly decorated and grotesquely dressed men and women marched in stately order, bearing a huge cross, and reenacted, in crude fashion, the scene of Calvary. Years ago men, taking the rôle of Jesus, were crucified, and some even died under the torture, but the government put a stop to that, and the laws of reform no longer allow external religious rites. The processions are therefore confined to the churches and to the church yards.

The noisiest day in the year for Mexican children is Holy Saturday, the last day of Lent, just preceding Easter Sunday. At ten o'clock that day the Judases are exploded and the church-bells ring out after their silence of two days and a half.

That they might enjoy this day together, Juanita invited her girl friends, Rosa and Sarita,

to come and sit upon her balcony, where they would get a good view of the street.

Carlos and Panchito went upon the street and joined in the sports with other boys and men. During the day the girls got many a glance and an answering wave of the hand from them.

Along the sidewalks ran many small boys dragging their *matracas*, or little carts with pieces of wood fitting into the spokes of the wheels. These were grating and grinding all day long.

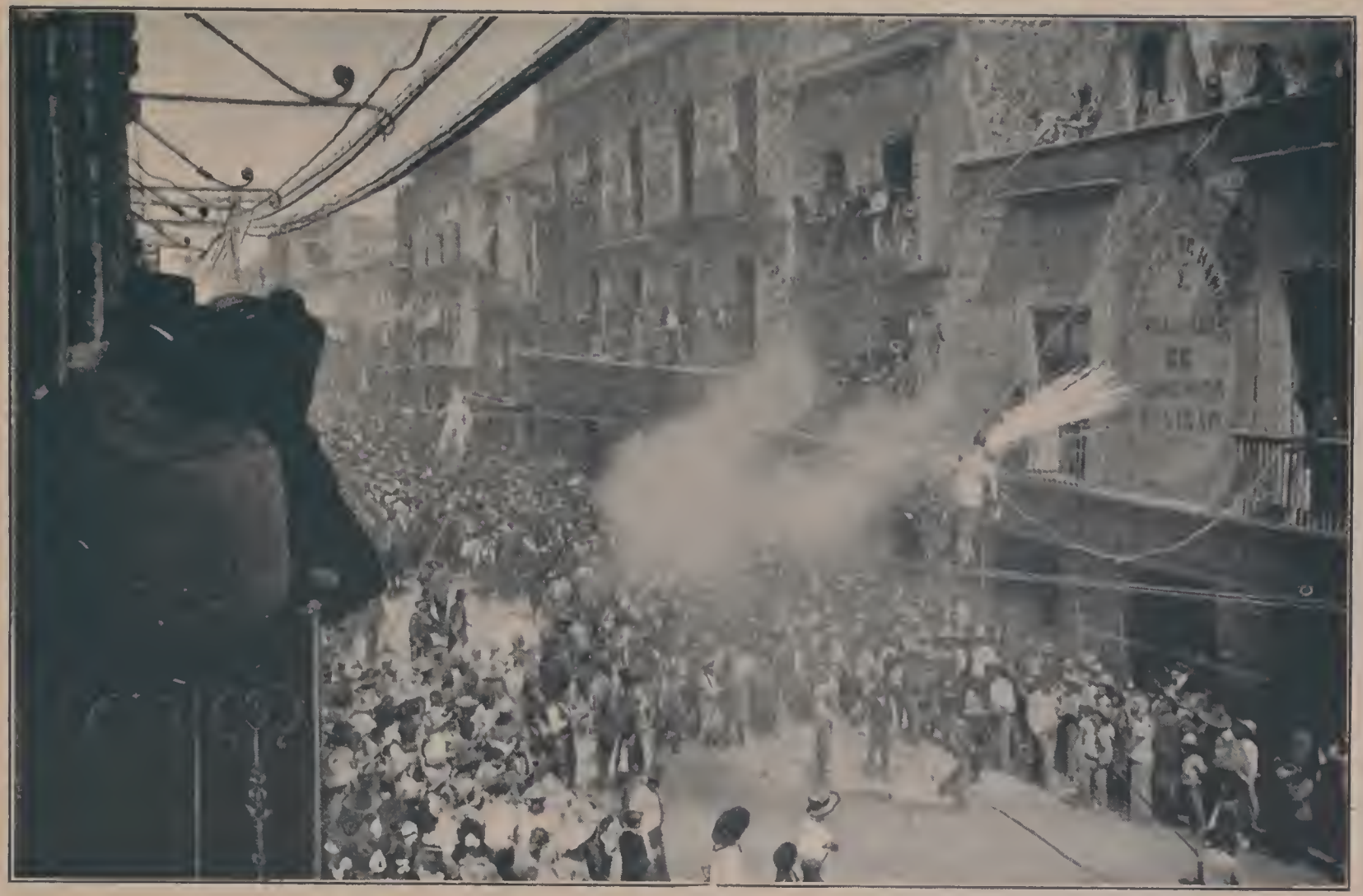
The popular feature of the day was the bursting of the Judases. These figures, impersonating the Iscariot, were made of pasteboard, and all sorts of human and inhuman figures were represented. Some had the faces of animals and birds, but the idea was to have them as hideous as possible. Along the arms or legs or wings, as the case might be, were tubes of gunpowder with fuses. When the

latter were lighted the whole grotesque creation went up in smoke with loud noises. The louder the noise the more keen the satisfaction and the pleasure of the people, for they were thus avenging the treachery of Judas toward Jesus.

In some parts of the city the effigies were hung across the streets and from the balconies of the aristocratic houses, filled with toys and small coin, for which big and little wildly scrambled.

To the young American girls, Grace and Louise, who watched the fun from a balcony of their hotel, it seemed more like a celebration of the Fourth of July than a religious occasion. Easter Sunday was quietly observed, for the people were well-nigh spent by the observance of preceding days.

In the cathedral the services were signalized by grand music, the lighting of the huge paschal candle, and the removal, for the first time



"IN SOME PARTS OF THE CITY THE EFFIGIES WERE HUNG ACROSS THE STREETS."

since the forty days of Lent, of the girandole from its position. The paschal candle burned constantly until the expiration of the forty days following Easter. Flowers, candles, and incense were profusely employed. The vestments of the clergy were radiant with gold and precious stones, and many of the sacred vessels used on the altars were reserved especially for the Easter festivities. The high altar was decked with ornaments of gold, and the sermons dealt with the resurrection of Jesus.

Aside from the religious services, the day itself was one of the brightest in Mexico, and every one strove to appear in his or her best.

During Easter week Juanita and her friends gave and received presents and dulces.

Some months later Juanita called upon Rosa one morning, and asked her if she would not like to go to the flower-market with her.

"Why, yes, indeed I would," said Rosa. "But why are you going there to-day?"

"I want to get some flowers to decorate one of the altars in the cathedral for the feast of the Assumption, and I should very much like to have your help."

"Why not invite Sarita to go, too?" asked Rosa. "She has splendid taste in the arrangement of flowers."

"All right, we will," answered Juanita.

With this purpose in view, they called at Sarita's home, but found she was so busy helping her mother on some drawn-work, for which some customers were in a hurry, that she could not go with them.

The flower-market is situated close by the great cathedral, and thither the two girls hastened.

It was a brilliant, beautiful scene, — flowers to right, flowers to left, flowers all around. The immense wreaths of pansies and daisies were displayed effectively by the flower-boys. Great masses of white flowers of all kinds

formed a splendid background for the bunches of red and blue and yellow.

"Buy roses?" asked a piping voice at Juanita's elbow.

Juanita looked around and beheld a smiling brown lad not over eight years old, holding toward her a great bunch of splendid American Beauties.

"How much are they?" she asked.

"Ten centavos each."

As Juanita turned away the boy ran after her.

"I let you have them, señorita, for eight centavos."

But Juanita was not to be persuaded by the insistent boy. American Beauties were not what she wanted this morning, even though they could be purchased for a song.

By this time all the flower-boys in the market had discovered the girls' presence, and there was a rush at them with great bunches of all kinds of flowers.

It was hard work for Juanita to make her selection, but finally, with the help of Rosa, she managed to choose what she wanted and rid herself of the boys she did not care to patronize. This took some time, for the flower-sellers all asked at first more than they expected to get for their wares, and Juanita knew it; so she had to pretend not to be anxious to buy until they came down to a reasonable price.

The girls next took their flowers into the cathedral, where Rosa was of much assistance to Juanita in decorating the altar which was her share in preparing for the feast. Many other girls were at work in different parts of the edifice, and a splendid time they all had. When they got through, the place looked like an enchanted land in its profusion of flowers.

Among Juanita's former schoolmates was a young cadet at the military academy. The academy is attached to the Castle of Chapultepec. One day in September he invited

Juanita and her friends to visit the institution.

The trip was very much enjoyed. It was explained to the visitors that the military academy was founded in 1824 by General Guadalupe Victoria, the first President of the Mexican Republic. In 1847 the Americans stormed and captured the castle, which was defended by the cadets, an incident fittingly commemorated on the 8th of September. On the 30th of May, Memorial Day, their monument is always decorated by a committee from the American colony. The academy was reopened in 1863, but closed on account of the war with France. Finally, under the decree of President Juarez, it was opened in 1869. There are now about 250 cadets.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE END OF THE YEAR

About the close of October, Juanita was invited with her parents to a wedding. This momentous incident had been discussed by all the families in all its bearings for weeks before. The groom-elect had graduated from the military academy and was a captain in the regular army, by the name of Manuel Viesca. In the most approved fashion he had been courting Mercedes for some months, calling at the house and being duly accepted.

Early in the month he went to the Civil Register and declared his intentions, and two weeks later, on the 20th of the month, he and Mercedes, with three witnesses, presented themselves for the civil marriage.

The civil marriage in Mexico costs nothing if had at the Civil Register. If the judge goes to the house the fee averages twelve pesos, but the amount is optional.

Before this civil rite is performed there are fifteen days of probation. The names of the bride and groom elect are posted on a bulletin so that anybody having satisfactory reasons may oppose the ceremony.

But it was the religious ceremony to which Juanita had been invited. This was held in the little Church of La Divina Infanta, and was witnessed by about fifty or sixty friends.

It was a bright, beautiful day that greeted the young couple. Mercedes Silva, the bride, was a tall, pretty girl, a semi-brunette. Her veil was arranged with great care and flowed from underneath a bunch of orange blossoms. She carried an ivory prayer-book and rosary, the gift of the groom.

The bride entered first on the arm of her

father, followed by the bridegroom and his mother. Then followed the group of *padrinos*, the godmother and godfather in each case.

When the party got just inside the door of the church, the priest met them, attired in a beautiful costume of cloth of gold, and put the first question to them as to whether they wished to marry each other. Then the party went up and knelt together below the altar at prie-dieus, the priest offering the prayer. Then he gave two rings of gold to the groom, one to be put on the finger of the bride and the other on his own.

Some more questions were asked and the groom handed the bride thirteen coins, gold pesos, which she gave to the priest. They proceeded closer to the altar, where they knelt about half an hour while the priest prayed and there was some very fine orchestral music.

While they were thus kneeling another priest took part of the bridal veil and put it

over the groom, and then placed a silver chain over both the parties. Then the officiating priest blessed them and they marched out of the church.

Thence they rode in a carriage to a photograph establishment to have their pictures taken, which is quite the thing in Mexico, after which they held an informal reception at the home of the bride's parents. The servants brought in *copitas*, or drinks, and then there was a big dinner. Afterward there was dancing.

To witness a wedding was a new experience to Juanita, and it was no wonder that she greatly enjoyed telling Sarita and Rosa about it afterward. It furnished a subject of conversation for them for weeks to come, — in fact until they began to get ready for the Christmas festivities.

In the days of Santa Anna and President Guadalupe Victoria, Christmas was celebrated

by the Mexicans with much more ceremony than to-day. Cannon were fired by the government at sunrise and sunset and at high noon, as they are fired to-day on the birth of some earthly prince. Processions went through the streets of Mexico with government officers and the military in full uniform and led by the archbishop and the clergy and canons of the cathedral.

Now Christmas Day is one of the most quiet days in the year and is solemnly but sedately observed in the churches. All the excitement of the season centralizes about the *posadas* and the *piñatas*, that precede this day of days.

In fact, there is less observance of the *posadas* than in former years. The original *posadas* were supposed to be religious in their character or nature, but of recent years the tendency has been to relaxation in the religious observance, the children being so anxious for

the breaking of the *piñata.* Therefore, in 1894, the archbishop forbade the *posadas.* However, the observance is too Mexican in its character to be easily set aside, especially in homes where the Catholic mandate is not taken seriously.

They were the delight of the children. Every night the children gathered in the corridors of their own homes or in their *patios* for this fun-making.

The *patios* were all illuminated and decorated with lanterns and flowers, especially with the brilliant poinsette or crimson flower, which is of bright red colour.

The children marched around the corridors, each holding a lighted candle and singing "*Ora pro nobis,*" which is adapted from the Loretto ritual. They went round and round from room to room, stopping at each door and singing their little song. The song described the journeyings of Joseph and Mary looking for a room.

The groups of children were repulsed from one room to another as the Holy Family was repulsed in Bethlehem. Finally, they reached one of the rooms which was opened to them. The little figures which they carried representing the Holy Family were then placed by the children in some corner and forgotten till the next evening and they began the fun of the *piñata*.

As formerly observed, the ceremonies in connection with the *posadas* began nine days before Christmas Day.

This year, instead of each family having a celebration by itself, the Jiminez and Ortiz families accepted the invitation of Señora Alvarez to join with them in the day's festivities.

In Mexico Christmas is different from the old-time Christmas of Hans Christian Andersen, or from the Christ-time as observed in the United States and in Europe.

"EACH BOY AND GIRL HAD THREE CHANCES TO HIT THE *PIÑATA*."

There is no snow, except on the big volcanoes sixty miles away, and therefore there are no sleigh-bells or harnessed reindeer in the air.

Until the comfort of fireplaces and open hearths was brought by the Americans, these were not known in Mexico, and there were no chimneys. Consequently, there was no way for Santa Claus to enter the houses.

In American homes, however, Santa Claus has been welcomed for the past fifteen years, and Mexico now knows something about Christmas trees, hungry stockings, mistletoe branches, and all the witchery of Christmas as known to its northern neighbours.

But Mexico has plenty of flowers always, and during the days before Christmas Rosa and her two girl friends decorated her home exquisitely. Panchito assisted in this work, for a boy is handy when there are nails to be driven and decorations to be put up.

The preparation of the *piñata* was the special work of Señora Alvarez, though it is fair to say that both Señoras Jiminez and Ortiz had a hand in it.

A jar of clay was dressed in the shape of a great doll and decorated with coloured papers, and filled with candies and toys. The night before Christmas, after Rosa and Panchito were asleep, it was hung in the centre of the sitting-room.

Bright and early Christmas morning Sarita and Carlos and little Maria and Juanita, with their parents, put in an appearance at the Alvarez home. The little house was pretty well filled, but if there was a slight lack of room, there was no want of hospitality and good cheer.

After all had gathered, there was no waiting for the all-important ceremony, for the children were anxious to break the *piñata*.

They were blindfolded in turn, and each boy

and girl had three chances to hit the *piñata* with a stick.

First Carlos took his turn. What shouts all set up as he once, twice, three times, vainly beat the air with his stick.

Strange as it may seem, the children all failed in their first trial to break the *piñata*. Then they began over again with little Maria, who, with a good deal of giggling and dancing, was blindfolded once more. Juanita turned her around several times and said, "Now strike hard."

With a mighty effort Maria swung around her arm, and hit — nothing!

Again she turned a little, and again struck out and hit — nothing!

A third time she moved, and, carefully swinging the stick far over her head, hit the *piñata* squarely in the middle, and scattered its contents all over the room.

With much shouting and laughing the chil-

dren made a scramble for the good things spread around, and for an hour or more there was plenty of fun in undoing mysterious packages. The rapturous exclamations at the revelation of their contents amply repaid for all the labour and trouble the affair had cost the older members of the different families.

Not until very late that evening did the party break up, but finally all went to their own homes, and tired young folks soon forgot their weariness and excitement in the land of dreams.

THE END.

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